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ABSTRACT

Student views concerning race relations and other contemporary issues were studied at the University of Maryland, College Park. Questionnaires were administered to 390 incoming freshmen, of whom 80 percent were White, 13 percent Black, 4 percent Asian, and 3 percent Hispanic. The first questionnaire was designed to elicit both attitudes and behavior toward members of racial groups other than one's own. For the second questionnaire, respondents indicated how they thought most college students felt about people holding certain values. Ten major factors were identified by factor analysis: interaction with other races, beliefs about racism within racial groups, racial social distance, perceived attitudes toward drug users, perceived attitudes toward dishonesty, perceived attitudes toward racism, perceptions of liberal attitudes, parental racial attitudes, social responsibility in racism, and perceived attitudes toward nontraditional beliefs. It was found that attitudes, behavior, and social norms represent independent domains, and that within each domain there are distinct areas of generalization. (SW)

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## SUMMARY

390 incoming freshmen responded to two anonymous questionnaires designed to elicit personal attitudes, expected behavior, and perceptions of social norms regarding race relations and other contemporary issues. Factor analysis of the instrument items resulted in a total of 10 factors which accounted for over 70% of the common variance. These factors included such dimensions as "Racial Social Distance," "Parental Racial Attitudes," and "Perceived Attitudes Toward Racism." The results indicated that attitudes, behavior and social norms represent independent domains, and that within each domain there are distinct areas of generalization. Further use of factor analysis for both pure and applied research in race relations is suggested.

Student development theory has proposed that an important goal for college students is to increase tolerance and respect for diverse values, backgrounds, and habits (Chickering, 1969). Acceptance of cultural diversity would, therefore, be an important aspect of such development. Parallel to this, understanding cultural differences has also been proposed as a fundamental step toward eliminating racism (Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976). Suggestions have been made, however, that the increased tolerance suggested by Chickering is not being fully met on college campuses (Merritt, Sedlacek, & Brooks, 1977; Minatoya & Sedlacek, 1981). Efforts to understand this discrepancy have increased along with corresponding increase in the number of minority students entering higher education.

The study of such racial concerns, like most social science research, has traditionally been focused on behavior and attitudes. More recently, the role of environmental influences has increased in importance. One aspect of the environment which has received attention recently is called the "social climate." According to Schneider (1975), the term refers to the "molar perceptions people have of their setting (which are) necessary as a frame of reference for gauging the appropriateness of behavior" (p.473). Thus, the social climate consists of perceived norms and expectancies, although its role in determining attitudes and behavior is unclear.

Though some researchers have indicated the pressures on individuals to conform to social norms, there may be evidence that in racial attitudes people often form attitudes that are in contrast to the prevailing climate. For example, Sedlacek and Brooks (1971) found that white college students held negative attitudes toward blacks despite their perception that being racist or bigoted was not socially acceptable.

One way to understand this complex relationship between attitudes, behavior, and social climate in race relations is to conduct a factor analysis. Factor

analysis is a useful procedure for organizing one's thoughts about a given subject. Its aim is to summarize the relationships among variables to help in conceptualizing a problem (Gorsuch, 1974). Empirically, it can determine the variables that cluster together to represent an area of generalization, as well as determine the variables that are independent of one another. The purpose of the present study was to determine which aspects of racism are related to one another and which are distinct.

## Method

Two anonymous questionnaires designed to elicit student attitudes, behavior, and perceptions of social norms were administered to 390 incoming freshmen at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP). The sample was 47% male and 53% female, 80% white, 13% black, 4% Asian, and 3% Hispanic.

The first questionnaire was designed to elicit both attitudes and behavior toward members of racial groups other than one's own. This 29-item questionnaire included demographic items, questions regarding contact with other races, parental atttitudes toward other races, and Likert items of racial beliefs and practices. A similar questionnaire was developed by Brooks, Sedlacek, and Mindus (1973).

The second questionnaire (35 items) asked respondents to indicate how they thought most college students felt about people holding certain values. This items contained several racial references, beliefs from Rokeach, Smith and Evans (1960), and several contemporary issues in order to update a version of the questionnaire used by Sedlacek and Brooks (1971). As in the previous research by Sedlacek and Brooks, subjects were asked to rate each item according to how they believed <u>most</u> college students felt, on a five-point scale from strongly positive to strongly negative. This method is similar to that used by Thurstone in developing equal-interval scaling (Thurstone & Chave, 1929).

## RESULTS

The item responses from both polls were intercorrelated and factor analyzed, using principal components with squared multiple correlations, as the communality estimate and factors with eigenvalues≥1 rotated to a varimax solution. A total of 22 factors were identified which could account for 100% of the common variance; 10 of these factors accounted for more than 70% of the common variance (see Table 1).

Factor I, labeled "Interaction with Other Races", contained items that dealt with the racial composition of one's high school and neighborhood, and the extent of contact with teachers of other races. Blacks tended to score high on this dimension, while whites tended to score low, indicating that blacks tended to have had more interracial contact than whites. This factor represents a behavioral index of the different environments in which blacks and whites grow up.

Factor II was labeled "Beliefs About Racism Within Racial Groups." The items that comprise this factor were statements that most individuals within certain racial groups were racist. Low scorers agreed with items such as "Most blacks are racist", "Most whites are racist", while high scorers disagreed.

Factor III, "Racial Social Distance", reflected the extent to which respondents interacted with other racial groups socially as in dating, marrying, or being roommates. High scorers on this factor favored interracial social contact, while low scorers tended to feel uncomfortable with other racial groups.

Factor IV reflected "Perceived Attitudes Toward Drug Users." This factor contained items about attitudes toward users of cocaine, speed, marijuana and heroin. High scorers on this factor believed most students viewed drug users negatively, while low scorers believed favorable perceptions existed toward drug users.

Factor V, labeled "Perceived Attitudes Toward Dishonesty", dealt with perceptions of how most college students feel toward thieves, untrustworthy

persons, embezzlers, tax cheaters, and cheaters on exams. Those scoring high on this dimension saw negative peer group attitudes toward dishonest persons.

Factor VI reflected "Perceived Attitudes Toward Racism". This factor contained items dealing with race. High scorers perceived a negative social climate for racists, bigots, and those against interracial fraternities and sororities. Low scorers perceived an environment which tolerated racists and bigots.

Factor VII was comprised of items that reflected "Perceptions of Liberal Attitudes." High scorers perceived that college students felt negative about those who favor premarital sex, liberals, and marijuana smokers, while feeling positive toward virgins and those opposing legal abortion. In contrast, low scorers perceived negative attitudes toward virgins and those against abortion, but perceived positive attitudes toward liberals, marijuana smokers and those favoring premarital sex.

Factor VIII reflected "Parental Racial Attitudes." The items loading on this factor described the racial attitudes of each parent and the extent to which student racial attitudes were similar to those of their parents. High scorers on this dimension had parents who were negative toward other races, but the students themselves disagreed with those racial attitudes. Low scorers had parents with positive racial attitudes, but tended to have more negative racial attitudes themselves.

Factor IX represented "Social Responsibility in Racism". The items loading on this factor reflected the role of social policy in promoting or discouraging racism, and efforts a university should take to deal with institutional racism. High scorers did not believe that the university should recruit blacks or require courses in race relations, and disagreed that Reagonomics would affect blacks more than whites. Low scorers agreed with these statements and believed that society must integrate.

Factor X consisted of items reflective of "Perceived Attitudes toward Non-traditional Beliefs." The items loading on this factor included "homosexual", "lesbian", and "communist." High scorers perceived a negative social climate for people engaged in those lifestyles, while low scorers on this dimension perceived acceptance for them.

## DISCUSSION

The results indicate that attitudes, behavior, and social norms represent distinct areas of generalization in race relations. Items loading on each factor reflected either personal attitudes, personal behavior, or perceived social norms, but not combinations of these areas. For example, items from the questionnaire measuring racial attitudes and behavior did not load on the same factors as items from the questionnaire measuring acceptance of various social roles. Even among the items concerning racial contact, attitudinal and behavioral items did not load on the same factors.

Six factors were found to be related to racial concerns: two behavioral, three attitudinal, and one relating to norms.

Both behavioral factors reflected contact with other races. Factor I (Interaction) related to the environment in which one was raised. As such, it described situations in which the respondent had little choice or control (e.g. neighborhood, high school, teaching staff). Thus the extent of contact was determined by parents and other authority figures, and by economic, social, and political variables. It also reflected contact that may have existed in the past: i.w. in childhood and adolescence. In contrast, the other behavioral factor, Racial Social Distance (Factor III), reflected contact in which the subject might exhibit freedom of choice (dating, marrying, roommate). It also reflected the subject's current degree of contact and comfort with other races, particularly in intimate social situations.

Within the present study there were three independent factors that focused on racial attitudes. Factor II, Racism within Groups, reflected the extent to which one believed each distinct group (e.g. whites, blacks, Hispanics, etc.) is racist. Discomfort with interracial contact was moderately correlated with this factor. Further research might be useful to determine whether the belief that other race persons are racist provided a rationalization for one's own level of discomfort in contact situations. Factor VIII, Parental Racial Attitudes, was a very different domain: that of parental attitudes and their similarity to one's own attitudes. Surprisingly, the items on this factor did not load on other factors such as Social Distance or Social Responsibility, where one might expect parental values to have had influence. The Social Responsibility factor (Factor IX) was also a distinctly attitudinal domain, reflecting attitudes toward social action to decrease racism, the relative effects of social policies on blacks and whites, and the status of blacks within society today. The attitudes represented in this factor have ramifications for the future support of programs and policies affecting blacks. As a group, these three factors showed not only attitudes, but also that these areas were distinct from one another.

The final factor dealing with race, "Perceived Attitudes toward Racism" (Factor VI), contained the social norm items relating to race. The results indicated that the perceived prevailing racial attitude norms on a college campus have little to do with one's personal racial attitudes and behavior, providing further support for the similar findings of Sedlacek and Brooks (1971).

The remaining factors reflected the social norms concerning a variety of topics: drug use (Factor IV), dishonesty (Factor V), liberal attitudes (Factor VII), and non-traditional beliefs (Factor X). These last factors were composed

of quite diverse items. The Liberal factor, for example, contained items that reflect several contemporary issues that are particularly relevant to college students: premarital sex, virginity, abortion, and marijuana smoking. The Non-traditional factor reflected perceptions of attitudes toward persons whose behavior or beliefs may lead them to be considered social outcasts: homosexuals, communists, and atheists. It is difficult to interpret the role of the item concerning fundamental racial differences that loaded on this factor, however. Were those who believed that there are no differences between the races also likely to be social outcasts?

To reiterate, the major conclusion of this study was that the domains of attitude, behavior, and social norms are independent in the topic of race relations. Within each of these domains there were also distinct areas of generalization. Factor analysis served as a useful tool for outlining the organization of relevant variables, and also for determining the relative importance of variables within each given factor. As a measurement tool, factor analysis is probably too often overlooked by researchers in race relations. However, it might be useful in the development and evaluation of services and programs as well as in pure research.

Race relations has often been considered a unitary concept, such that attitudes or behavior in one area are expected to be similar to the attitudes or beliefs associated with other areas. The present study provided evidence that behavior, attitudes and social norms are measurable but independent aspects of race relations.

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TABLE 1

FIVE LARGEST ITEM LOADINGS ON EACH FACTOR

| ITEM | FACTOR LOADING |
|---|---|
| **Factor I (Interaction with Other Races)** | |
| What is the racial composition of the high school from which you graduated? | .91 |
| How would you describe the racial composition of (your) neighborhood? | .70 |
| Race = White (1=white, 2=other) | -.60 |
| How many times have you had a teacher of another race? | .57 |
| Race = Black (1=black, 2=other) | .47 |
| 19% of common variance | |
| **Factor II (Beliefs About Racism Within Racial Groups)** | |
| Most blacks are racist. | .77 |
| Most whites are racist. | .75 |
| Most Hispanics are racist. | .70 |
| Most Asians are racist. | .69 |
| I do <u>not</u> feel comfortable with someone of another race. | .19 |
| 12% of common variance | |
| **Factor III (Racial Social Distance)** | |
| I would date someone of another race. | .91 |
| I would marry someone of another race. | .72 |
| I would enjoy having a roommate of another race. | .63 |
| I do <u>not</u> feel comfortable with someone of another race. | -.35 |
| Blacks are getting toom much in the society these days. | -.26 |
| 10% of common variance | |
| **Factor IV (Perceived Attitudes Toward Drug Users)** | |
| A regular cocaine user. | .74 |
| A regular speed user. | .73 |
| Someone who smokes marijuana. | .56 |
| A regular heroin user. | .42 |
| An embezzler. | -.32 |
| 6% of common variance | |
| **Factor V (Perceived Attitudes Toward Dishonesty)** | |
| A thief. | .62 |
| Someone untrustworthy. | .61 |
| An embezzler. | .49 |
| Someone who cheats on income taxes. | .45 |
| Someone who cheats on exams. | .39 |
| 5% of common variance | |

TABLE 1 (cont.)

| ITEM | FACTOR LOADING |
|---|---|
| **Factor VI (Perceived Attitudes Toward Racism)** | |
| A racist. | .79 |
| A bigot. | .62 |
| Someone against interracial fraternities and sororities. | .34 |
| Someone who believes there are fundamental differences between the races. | .29 |
| A Ku Klux Klan member. | .22 |
| 5% of common variance | |
| **Factor VII (Perceptions of Liberal Attitudes)** | |
| Someone favoring premarital sex. | .72 |
| A liberal. | .57 |
| A virgin. | -.48 |
| Someone who smokes marijuana. | .39 |
| Someone who opposes legal abortion. | -.35 |
| 5% of common variance | |
| **Factor VIII (Parental Racial Attitudes)** | |
| Racial attitudes of your father (guardian) negative. | .77 |
| Racial attitudes of your mother (guardian) negative. | .76 |
| My attitude toward other races is similar to that of my parents. | .35 |
| Blacks are getting too much in the society these days. | -.22 |
| Someone who cheats on income taxes. | -.18 |
| 4% of common variance | |
| **Factor IX (Social Responsibility in Racism)** | |
| The University should actively recruit black students. | .58 |
| The University should offer a required course in race relations. | .49 |
| President Reagan's economic policies will affect blacks more than whites. | .48 |
| The society must integrate if it is to survive. | .45 |
| Blacks are getting too much in the society these days. | -.23 |
| 4 % of common variance | |
| **Factor X (Attitudes Toward Non-traditional Beliefs)** | |
| A homosexual. | .74 |
| A lesbian. | .63 |
| A communist. | .44 |
| An atheist. | .28 |
| Someone who believes there are fundamental differences between the races. | -.24 |
| 3% of common variance | |